Battle Command

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Know the enemy, know yourself;
your victory will never be endangered.
Know the ground, know the weather;
your victory will then be total.
—Sun Tzu[1]

DEPARTMENT of the Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, says, "The art of command lies in the conscious and skillful exercise of command authority through visualization, decisionmaking, and leadership."[2] These characteristics are the hallmarks of great leaders within the military profession. Great leaders are able to visualize an operation from its current state to an end state; to make qualitatively better decisions than can an enemy; and to lead soldiers in peace and in combat. Perfecting professional skills improves the organization by helping develop future leaders and build future teams. Strong teams enable the Army to operate as a learning organization capable of adapting to meet any challenge.

The complexity of the military profession requires leaders who can make the most of physical, intellectual, and moral resources. The professional challenge of battle command involves applying the art and science of war to specific conditions. Doctrine assists, but doctrine is descriptive, not prescriptive, and requires commanders to get personally involved and make decisions.[3] This article focuses on the thoughtful application of doctrine in specific conditions. I endeavor to show how to apply doctrine, using METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops available, time, and civil considerations).

Battle command is developed and practiced based on two integrated leadership models that guide operations in garrison and in the field—the Model of Excellence and the Battle Command Model. The models provide the foundations for effective leadership and battle command in the wide range of conditions encountered by deployed units.

The Model of Excellence

The Model of Excellence depicts the relationship between competence, confidence, discipline, and esprit de corps that complements Army values and enables units to perform effectively under a variety of conditions. The Model of Excellence focuses on standards, and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) are keepers of the standards. The model's three principal components—competence, confidence, and discipline—are mutually reinforcing. Balance among competence, confidence, and discipline creates strong units with high esprit de corps.

Competence. Competence means that soldiers have the skill, knowledge, and ability to do their jobs—and to do them right. Competence is the mastery of four domains: values, attributes, skills, and actions.[4] The Army values—loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (LDRSHIP)—reflect individual character and represent the heart of our soldier-centered profession.

The three types of attributes from the Army leadership framework—mental, physical, and emotional—contribute to individual competence by providing the ability to learn and apply skills to solve Army problems.[5] These values and attributes clearly describe what a leader should BE.

Skill, the ability to apply knowledge to solve a problem, is essential to developing competence. All service members learn technical and tactical skills as part of their transformation from civilians to soldiers. Technical skills give soldiers the know-how to operate equipment. Tactical skills provide leaders with the knowledge to make the right decisions at the appropriate leader level concerning the employment of units in combat. Also, leaders develop interpersonal skills to gain knowledge of their people and how to work with them. Since leadership begins with influencing people, these skills are critical for operations and for improving the organization by developing future leaders. Finally, conceptual skills allow leaders to understand and apply doctrine and other ideas required to do the job. Developing skills in these four knowledge domains (technical, tactical, interpersonal, and conceptual) leads to competence in what leaders should KNOW.

The actions a leader must DO derive from the Army definition of leadership. Without action, one suffers from a syndrome known as "a whole lotta HOOAH and not enough DO-AH." Leader actions are categorized as influencing, operating, and improving. The "influencing actions" (communicating, decisionmaking, and motivating) stem from interpersonal and conceptual skills and are grounded in institutional values and character. The "operating actions" describe how Army forces conduct missions in a continuous cycle of planning, preparation, execution, and assessment. Battle command powers this operations process, which draws on commander and staff skills to address all aspects of the art and science of warfare. "Improving actions" focus on the organization and the institution by developing subordinates into future leaders and building teams and systems that endure beyond a leader's tenure. As soldier and leader competence grows, individual confidence inevitably follows.

Confidence. Confidence expands through repetition, which leads to an automatic response. Soldiers who know how to use equipment properly (technical skills) gain confidence that they can contribute to the mission. Mastery of the art of tactics at the appropriate level and competence in tactical skills give leaders the confidence to make sound decisions and give subordinates the confidence to make recommendations.

Soldiers and leaders must have the opportunity to develop interpersonal and conceptual skills. Knowing fellow leaders and soldiers and how to work with them offers the double benefit of developing confidence in one's own interpersonal skills and confidence in one's battle buddy. Developing confidence based on competence in conceptual skills means more than knowing doctrine, standing operating procedures, and tactics, techniques, and procedures. Confidence comes from developing the ability to understand and apply knowledge—first in thought, then in action.

Discipline. With competence and confidence achieved, discipline is required to achieve and maintain excellence. Individual soldier discipline is consistent with living up to Army values. Discipline means doing what needs to be done without being told to do it and doing what is right when no one is watching. Soldiers demonstrate self-discipline by mastering required skills, maintaining proficiency in those skills, and seeking opportunities to learn or develop new skills.

Unit discipline is the collective discipline of organizations of all sizes. Units train individual and collective skills, provide opportunities for ongoing training to maintain proficiency (competence), and provide training opportunities to develop new skills and to build confidence. Unit discipline also provides the expectation of accountability—not to be confused with a lack of trust. Accountability provides an impetus for increased discipline and provides structure for doing the "harder right."

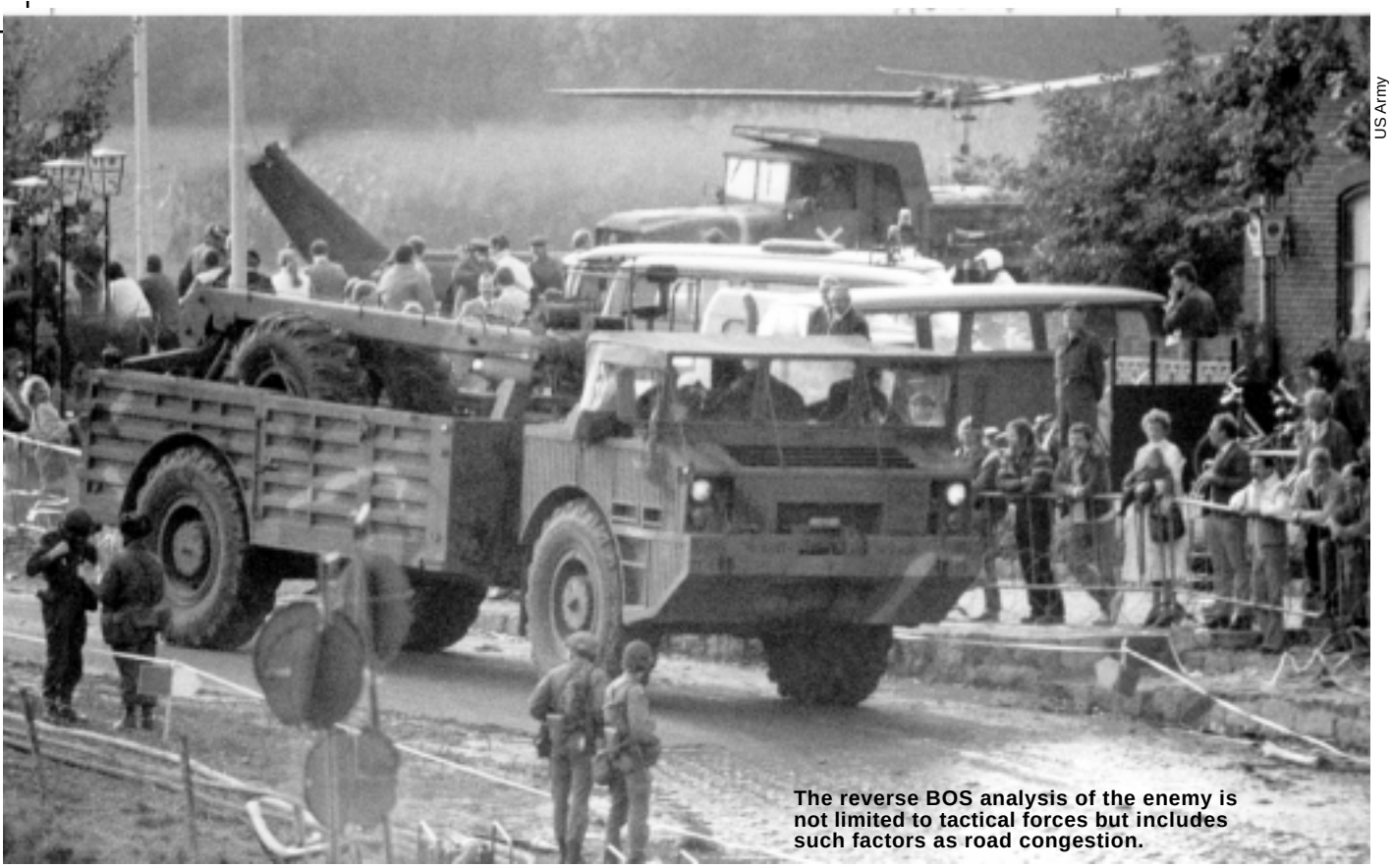
Leader discipline is perhaps the most important form of discipline in a warfighting organization. "However compassionate we may be with others, we dare not be soft or indulgent with ourselves. Excellence comes at a price, and one of the major prices is that of inner control."[6] NCOs are keepers of the standards. Organizational leaders develop individual and unit collective skills, and they also ensure discipline through policies, systems, and programs that promote competence, confidence, and discipline (for individuals, units, and leaders). Solid individual, unit, and leader discipline makes excellence possible at all levels.

The commander uses the battlefield framework to form the visualization. The assigned area of operations delineates the physical volume of space in which the formation will operate. The battlespace is conceptual and includes such things as the area of influence, the area of interest, the information sphere, the flow of reinforcements, institutional capabilities, and so on.

Esprit de corps. The by-products of competence, confidence, and discipline are esprit de corps and high morale. Esprit de corps is an indispensable commodity in military organizations, but one cannot buy it, sell it (or trade it in for something else), or demand its presence. Esprit de corps grows spontaneously when soldiers, leaders, and units operate with competence, confidence, and discipline. Find a unit with high morale and esprit de corps, and one can rest assured that disciplined, confident, competent soldiers fill its ranks, and disciplined, confident, competent leaders stand in front, behind, and within.

The Battle Command Model

The Battle Command Model of leadership supports decisionmaking in both tactical and garrison operations.[7] The Battle Command Model, grounded in Army decisionmaking and leadership doctrine, provides leaders with a useful framework within which to solve Army problems. The Battle Command Model depicts the essential elements of military decisionmaking including the five-paragraph field order and METT-TC. Perhaps most important, the Battle Command Model portrays the importance of understanding the relationships between each of the



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The reverse BOS analysis of the enemy is not limited to tactical forces but includes such factors as road congestion.

As commanders face everyday challenges in garrison and the field, the "enemy" is whatever stands in the way of excellence. Two principal examples are fighting the tyrannies (distance, dispersion, congestion, terrain and weather, and so on) and facing asymmetric threats against our vulnerabilities, such as terrorism. The value comes from seeing the enemy, not in isolation, but in relation to the other factors of the Battle Command Model.

individual considerations; the lines that connect the model's components represent the interdependence of several factors to assemble a coherent and holistic decisionmaking aid.

Visualize. The commander must visualize each operation from the current state along a line of operations to the end state. Through the application of the art of war, the commander gets a picture of the operation in his mind. Intuition, based on experience and education, feeds the art of this process. But, just as a painter must know the primary colors and the combinations that produce complementary colors in order to create a masterpiece, the commander must know the science of war and demonstrate mastery of it. The science of war provides the basis for logic and understanding of his visualization.

The commander uses the battlefield framework to form the visualization. The assigned area of operations delineates the physical volume of space in which the formation will operate. The battlespace is conceptual and includes such things as the area of influence, the area of interest, the information sphere, the flow of reinforcements, institutional capabilities, and so on. Another aid in forming the visualization is METT-TC, the factors of which aid in understanding how the mission relates to the situation in time, space, resources, and purpose.

Resources available vary based on the level of the organization, but they can be described by the elements of combat power (leadership, maneuver, firepower, protection, and information) and the battlefield operating systems (BOS). For the purpose of visualization, the specific tasks to the formation might not be fully developed, but the overall aim and the purpose of the operation must become clear. In the lexicon of operations doctrine, purpose-based operations facilitate the visualization by establishing early on what is decisive, which shaping operations support the decisive operation, and which sustaining operations facilitate the decisive and shaping operations. These purpose-based operations communicate purpose in spite of physical geometry.

See the enemy. "Battle command is the exercise of command in operations against a hostile, thinking opponent."[8] This is a critical consideration for, as Carl von Clausewitz says, "War is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass, but always the collision of two living forces."[9] As a living, thinking adversary, the opponent has a center of gravity (primary sources of moral or physical strength, power, and resistance), capabilities, requirements, and vulnerabilities.[10] From analyses of these,

A rifle squad conducting a situational training exercise.

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commanders determine decisive points, which they connect to form a line of operations. They conduct a reverse-BOS analysis of the enemy to better understand how he will fight. By doing so, commanders can remain enemy-focused, to fight the enemy (in multiple domains) wherever he is (in spite of geography).

This analysis is not limited to tactical employment against an armed force on a traditional battlefield. As commanders face everyday challenges in garrison and the field, the "enemy" is whatever stands in the way of excellence. Two principal examples are fighting the tyrannies (distance, dispersion, congestion, terrain and weather, and so on) and facing asymmetric threats against our vulnerabilities, such as terrorism. The value comes from seeing the enemy, not in isolation, but in relation to the other factors of the Battle Command Model.

See yourself. The initial step for seeing yourself goes back to the Model of Excellence—competence, confidence, discipline, and esprit de corps. Commanders must understand their own centers of gravity, capabilities, requirements, and vulnerabilities. Again, this analysis cannot be completed in isolation; it must take into account the current situation with respect to the other components of the Battle Command Model.

The status of physical forces is only one piece of combat readiness. The aim of warfare is to impose one's will on the enemy. Will is energy and emotion, a passion balanced by judgment and principle.[11] Seeing yourself involves other moral forces, such as personality, esprit de corps, health (physical, emotional, and spiritual), and courage.

See the terrain and weather. The factors of OCOKA (observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles, key terrain, and avenues of approach) still serve for terrain analysis, and operational weather forecasts serve well. The weather is the first enemy. Summer heat waves contrast sharply with bitter cold winters, and ever-changing weather conditions challenge operations. The Battle Command Model enables seeing the terrain and weather in relation to the other factors of the model. The effect of terrain and weather is what is important. Knowing there are narrow routes with poor trafficability is useful, but knowing their effect on the enemy, friendly forces, and the military operation is more so.

Describe

Once the commander has assembled his visualization, he must share his vision for it to become

actionable. He must articulate his visualization to subordinate commanders and the staff and describe his visualization of the operation from the current state to the end state, using the terminology and language of the profession to clearly accomplish a shared visualization.

The formal means of articulating the visualization to the entire formation is through commander's intent and commander's guidance. The commander describes how he sees the operation unfolding in time, space, resources (combat power), purpose (decisive, shaping, or sustaining), and action. The uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity that accompany the fog of war should be mitigated by clear, concise commander's intent and guidance.

Embedded intent. The Battle Command Model addresses commander's intent as "embedded intent" to demonstrate the importance of integration and interdependence throughout the model. The aim of any operation in combat is to impose one's will on the enemy. Based on the strategy employed, the ends, ways, and means for accomplishing that aim differ. The commander's intent clearly establishes the purpose of the operation and the key tasks that must be accomplished in relation to the visualized end state. The intent itself should be actionable and understood two levels down. Since most Army operations are part of a larger unified action, it is important that the intent be nested with the higher commander's mission and intent two levels up.[12]

Time, space, resources, and purpose. The shared visualization that comes from the commander describes the operation in terms of time, space, resources, and purpose. Actions are described in time as simultaneous or sequential. Tempo, frequency, and duration of the operation describe the flow of the action. The timing of the operation, relative to the enemy and conditions, describes time relationships. The relation in space includes mutual supportability based on distances and line of sight, vertical airspace, and the effects of distance on lines of communication and the line of operations. If applicable, the commander should describe the opportunities to pursue an indirect approach to the end state.

A critical part of military action is the commander's decisionmaking. The goal is to enable commanders to make qualitatively better decisions relative to those made by an enemy. Qualitatively better means a right decision, at the appropriate level, at the right time. Being better is not as simple as making decisions faster and more often than can an enemy. For example, making a faster decision to transition to the defense might cause a commander to miss an opportunity for exploitation if the enemy commander decides at the same time to retrograde). Commanders should do everything possible to exploit or deny the enemy's ability to make quality decisions.

Direct

Armed with the commander's intent, subordinate commanders and staffs work to apply resources to achieve the desired end state, adjusting tasks of units in space and time to achieve the described purpose. Commanders communicate the specific task and purpose to each subordinate in the "direct" function. The doctrinal process that drives this military decisionmaking is the operations process.

Operations process. Battle command drives the operations process of planning, preparation, execution, and assessment, and the process cannot be accomplished effectively without everything discussed so far. The operations process begins with confident leader actions based on solid skills (technical, tactical, interpersonal, and conceptual) by those with the character and attributes to command effectively. The commander visualizes the operation, describes it in terms of intent and guidance, and makes decisions to direct tasks to fulfill the purpose of the operation in planning and preparation. The commander continues to make execution decisions (to adjust to the situation, allocate resources to restore the plan, or adapt completely and change the plan). Assessment is continuous. The entire process is not linear, but cyclical. So a crucial part of the Battle Command Model is its continued application before, during, and after operations.

Concept of the operation. The concept of the operation describes how the commander sees the actions of each of his units fitting together to accomplish the mission. The concept of the operation is the integration of the elements of combat power and BOS into the purpose-based operations the commander visualizes, based on the anticipated conditions of METT-TC. The simultaneous or sequential timing of the operation is described from the current state to the end state and includes the decisive operation, the several shaping operations that ensure its success, and the sustaining operations that support them all. Once again, the integration of the blocks in the Battle Command Model enable the concept of the operation to address time, space, task, and purpose in relation to the conditions and is always tied to the embedded intent, which is the result of the visualization.

Running estimate. The concept of the operation establishes common understanding up to execution time. Since the anticipated conditions of METT-TC never survive first contact, the running estimate provides the medium for continual situational understanding. The running estimate begins with mere situational awareness, becomes knowledge with

confirmation, and finally becomes understanding when the commander realizes the effects of changing conditions and adapts. The value of the running estimate is the continual integration of Battle Command Model components, including aspects of safety and managing risk. According to Clausewitz, "Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult."[13] Maintaining situational understanding gives commanders a better chance of overcoming friction. The running estimate must be continuously updated, and striving for situational understanding must become habit.

Leader habit and discipline. The final component of the Battle Command Model brings us back to the Model of Excellence (confidence, competence, and discipline for soldiers, units, and leaders, which breed esprit de corps for deployed units). Leaders of character and competence act to achieve excellence by developing confidence through repeated actions, which become habit. Leveraging competence, nourishing confidence, and instilling discipline and accountability throughout the formation, leaders demonstrate the relevance and power of the Model of Excellence and its integration with the Battle Command Model.

A Pattern of Thinking

Battle command is a pattern of thinking for the entire formation. The Model of Excellence serves as a simple aid for training and development to achieve excellence, and it reflects leadership doctrine. The Battle Command Model incorporates the doctrinal model of visualize-describe-direct, encompasses the unique challenges of serving in deployed locations, and helps develop future leaders—planting the seeds that will germinate and grow throughout thousands of careers.

The enduring benefit of these comprehensive models is that they facilitate an ongoing, holistic view of all operations instead of "stovepipe," BOS-specific views from the staff. As new soldiers and leaders arrive, rapid integration of new personnel is critical to the continual preparation to "fight tonight." Deployed units do not have the luxury of relying merely on the collective experience of thousands of soldiers from dozens of other warfighting headquarters. Deployed units have unique challenges, with unique organizations. They are usually task organized and employed differently from how they were trained in garrison. Deployed units must have soldiers and leaders who think, train, work, and fight using consistent models rooted in Army doctrine.

As a commander seeks a shared visualization of the challenges he faces, he must integrate all of the elements of the five-paragraph field order, address all factors of METT-TC, and conduct running estimates to adapt to ever-changing situations. He must see himself and develop competence, confidence, discipline, and esprit de corps. He must see the enemy, weather, and terrain to discern their effect on the operation. The embedded intent and concept of the operation establish the actions he must accomplish in time and space to achieve a common purpose—victory.

With situational understanding, commanders can "initiate combat on our terms, gain and maintain contact, and seize and hold the initiative. We win on the offense [and through the exercise of battle command, we can] build momentum quickly and win decisively (one hundred to nothing on the scoreboard)."[14] This comprehensive, holistic focus, helps commanders integrate BOS in planning, execution, and during transitions. The devil is in the details, and the art and science of war enable the orchestration of the details into an integrated operation. Commanders give back to the institution by developing future leaders who understand the connections between all of the above: This is battle command. ***MR***

NOTES

1. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed., Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 129.
2. U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office (GPO), 14 June 2001), 5-1.
3. Doctrine is defined as "the fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application" (FM 101-5-1, *Operational Terms and Graphics* [Washington, DC: GPO, 30 September 1997], 1-55).
4. For further discussion of Army leadership doctrine and the Army Leadership Framework, see FM 22-100 (renumbered FM 6-22), *Army Leadership* (Washington DC: GPO, June 1999).
5. Mental attributes include will, self-discipline, initiative, judgment, self-confidence, intelligence, and cultural awareness. Physical attributes include health, fitness, and professional bearing. Emotional attributes include self-control, balance, and stability.
6. Elton Trueblood, *The New Man for Our Time* (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room Press, 1983), 227.
7. The Battle Command Model is derived from the work presented in Battle Command Battle Lab (BCBL) Publication 2.1, *Battle Command* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: BCBL, 1994), 57.
8. FM 3-0, 5-1.
9. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds., Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 77.
10. For more discussion of centers of gravity, critical capabilities, critical requirements, and critical vulnerabilities, *see* Joe Strange, *Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Foundation Press, 1996).
11. For a discussion of moral forces, *see* Clausewitz, 104-107.
12. Unified action includes joint, multinational, and interagency operations aimed at accomplishing a single mission.
13. Clausewitz, 119.
14. Eric Shinseki, remarks from final after-action review, Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) Warfighter Exercise, 17 December 2001.

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